John J. Thatamanil’s new book, *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity*, is a recent theological contribution to the scholarship on religious diversity. In addition to its profound theological reasoning, Thatamanil’s book raises a loud voice against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and other forms of hate. This book not only addresses religious diversity theologically but also invites everyone who desires to understand the plurality of religious expressions, engage in interreligious learning, and challenge religious isolationism.

This book mainly offers a renewed approach to religious diversity and shows how this shift can lead to new ground for theologies. The author encourages readers to take religious diversity, as not a problem, but a promise. Thatamanil’s invitation is not a naïve call for religious tolerance but a profound theological inquiry arguing that religious diversity is the will of the Christian God and thus intrinsically good. Reappropriating the old allegory of the blind men and the elephant, the author aims to redescribe the “elephant” of religious plurality by reconciling theologies of religious diversity with comparative theology and constructive theology. By doing so, Thatamanil illustrates how non-Christian traditions can transform Christian theology as Christianity has already been shaped by encounters with other religious traditions since its first days.

In Chapter 1, the author formulates how the merits of a theology of religious diversity, comparative theology, and constructive theology could be integrated. In Chapter 2, Thatamanil turns to inclusivist and exclusivist theologies and analyzes them according to their potential to facilitate interreligious learning and points to the inadequate theory of religion employed by these theologies. In Chapter 3, the author turns to contemporary forms of pluralist and particularist theologies. In his exploration of these complex theories of religion, Thatamanil emphasizes that religions have emerged in relation to each other, and their flourishing requires relational encounters. Starting from Chapter 4, the author challenges homogenizing accounts of religion and their tendency to reify traditions.

Keywords: religious diversity, interreligious learning, religious isolationism, comparative theology, constructive theology
against each other. Following this thread in Chapter 5, the author offers alternative definitions of religion for theology as a challenge to theologies of religious diversity, which employed classical definitions of religion that obstructed interreligious learning. In Chapter 6, Thatamanil turns to the fascinating interreligious learning examples of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., who prioritized receiving over giving in their mission. Thatamanil defines this posture as the hospitality of receiving and calls his readers to employ the same posture in interreligious learning.

The book’s argument reaches its zenith in Chapter 7, where the author models his theology by developing a new trinitarian theology of religious diversity shaped by Hindu, Christian and Buddhist traditions.

In *Circling the Elephant*, Thatamanil’s skilful prose communicates complex theological ideas in accessible language that makes his book appealing to different academic audiences. Theology scholars and students can benefit from this book as most contemporary theological systems inevitably encounter the question of religious plurality. Scholars from other social sciences interested in religious diversity can benefit from Thatamanil’s compelling description of how religious diversity has shaped Christianity from the outset and his call for further interreligious learning.

Thatamanil’s irenic, critically insightful, and eloquently written book is an invitation to a Christian theological self-understanding without instrumentalizing other traditions but learning with and from them. In the introduction, Thatamanil extends this invitation to Christian communities surrounded by a world where suspicion of difference is increasing. Thatamanil argues that these communities should engage in the habit of thinking of religious diversity as a promise rather than a problem. However, it is unclear how these communities can apply Thatamanil’s theological offering in their daily and community lives. By clarifying this point, the author could have shared his theological offering with a broader audience.